



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION 6
1445 ROSS AVENUE, SUITE 1200
DALLAS, TX 75202-2733

JUN 21 2006



**CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION
FOR SPECIAL APPROPRIATIONS ACT
SANITARY SYSTEM REHABILITATION PROJECT
FOR THE
VILLAGE OF RUIDOSO AND THE CITY OF RUIDOSO DOWNS
IN LINCOLN COUNTY, NEW MEXICO**

To All Interested Government Agencies and Public Groups:

In accordance with the regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality at 40 Code of Federal Regulations (40 CFR), Part 1500, and the implementing procedures at 40 CFR Part 6, *Procedures for Implementing the Requirements of the Council on Environmental Quality of the National Environmental Policy Act*, the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has determined that the following action is eligible for a Categorical Exclusion (CE) and exemption from further environmental review.

Sanitary System Rehabilitation Project
for the
Village of Ruidoso and the City of Ruidoso Downs
in Lincoln County, New Mexico

EPA Project Number: XP-976307-01

Estimated Total Federal Share: \$2,321,000

Estimated Local Share: \$1,000,000

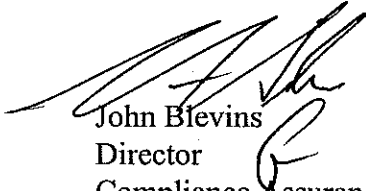
Project Description. The Village of Ruidoso and the City of Ruidoso Downs ("Ruidoso") are served by a regional wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) which currently uses a rented belt press thickener in its sludge dewatering operations. Ruidoso is working with state and federal agency officials to develop solutions to reduce the discharges of phosphorus and has embarked on a long-term plan to modernize its WWTP. As part of this plan, Ruidoso proposes to purchase and install a new belt press thickener to replace the rented thickener. The new thickener would be installed on the site of the existing WWTP and would not require the acquisition of additional land. A building would be constructed to protect the equipment, reduce maintenance costs, and extend the useful life of the equipment. All project activities would occur within previously disturbed areas already controlled by Ruidoso. The project will not increase the treatment capacity of the WWTP which discharges to Rio Ruidoso at Pecos River Basin Segment 20.6.4.208.

The proposed project will be financed through state grant and Congressional Special Appropriations Act funding, which allocated \$1,309,500 in Fiscal Year (FY) 2002, \$867,200 in FY 2003, and \$144,300 in FY 2004 for water and wastewater infrastructure projects in Ruidoso. Ruidoso has requested a CE exemption from the environmental review requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

Categorical Exclusion Determination. The proposed project qualifies for a CE. The project is a small-scale, routine action solely directed toward minor rehabilitation of an existing facility and functional replacement of equipment. The construction of the housing building for the thickener is appurtenant to the existing facilities. The proposed action will not individually, cumulatively over time, or in conjunction with any other Federal, state, local or private actions have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment and may be exempted from environmental review under NEPA. No adverse direct, indirect, or cumulative effects on cultural resources, endangered and threatened species or their critical habitat, floodplains, wetlands, prime farmlands, or aquifer recharge zones were identified. All residents in the area will benefit equally from the proposed infrastructure improvements.

Approval. The request for the issuance of a CE is approved. This approval will be revoked if at any time the project no longer meets the eligibility for a CE, new evidence determines that significant local or environmental issues exist, or that Federal, state, local or tribal laws are being or may be violated by implementation of the project.

Responsible Official,



John Blevins
Director
Compliance Assurance and
Enforcement Division

cc: Lorri McKnight, Village Manager, Village of Ruidoso
John Waters, City Manager, City of Ruidoso Downs
Cindy Padilla, Director, Wastewater Management Division, NMED